

This record is a partial extract of the original cable. The full text of the original cable is not available.

S E C R E T SECTION 01 OF 05 DHAKA 000768

SIPDIS

NOFORN

FROM RSO FOR DS/IP/NEA-SCA ATTN SCOTT GALLO
DS/ICI/PII, DS/DSS/CC, DS/DSS/ITA ATTN DREW DAVIS
DEPT FOR SA/PB AND S/CT

E.O. 12958: DECL: 02/12/2031

TAGS: [PTER](#) [KISL](#) [ASEC](#) [BG](#) [BG](#)

SUBJECT: JAMA'ATUL MUJAHIDEEN BANGLADESH'S "THREE TIERS OF THREAT"

REF: A. 05 DHAKA 00815
[B](#). 05 DHAKA 04090
[C](#). 05 DHAKA 04981
[D](#). 05 DHAKA 05594
[E](#). 05 DHAKA 05837
[F](#). 05 DHAKA 05853
[G](#). 05 DHAKA 05040
[H](#). 05 DHAKA 05963
[I](#). 05 DHAKA 06122
[J](#). 05 DHAKA 06350
[K](#). DHAKA 00462

Classified By: A/DCM DUNDAS MCCULLOUGH FOR REASONS 1.4 (C) AND (D)

[1](#). (C/NF) Summary. This telegram reviews Jama'atul Mujahideen Bangladesh's (JMB) target selection and the evolution of its tactics since the August 17 bomb blasts. It also lays out JMB's &Three Tiers of Threat as articulated to us by two senior Bangladeshi police officials, and highlights Embassy security counter-measures in response to these threats. End Summary.

JMB'S THREE TIERS OF THREAT

[2](#). (SBU) The BDG banned JMB, and Jagrata Muslim Janata Bangladesh (JMJB), in February 2005 for its apparent involvement in a spate of attacks on "cultural" targets and two prominent Bangladeshi NGOs (ref A). Long considered disorganized and a relatively low threat, JMB surprised the BDG and others with the coordinated organization and audacity of its nearly 500 bomb blasts on August 17 in 63 of Bangladesh's 64 districts. After apparently pausing for Ramadan in September, JMB in October began an accelerating campaign of terror against the BDG and then ordinary Bangladeshis.

[3](#). (C/NF) Deputy Commissioner of the Detective Branch (DCDB) of the Dhaka Metropolitan Police Mohammed Shohidul Islam characterized to RSO JMB's evolving tactics and target selection as "Three Tiers of Threat": 1) the judicial system and the government; 2) Political leftists and NGOs seen as un-Islamic because of their work to empower women; and 3) diplomats and other foreigners.

[4](#). (C/NF) Additional Inspector General of Police, Recruiting Maintenance & Training Mohammed Shohidullah Khan articulated the same three-tier framework in a separate meeting with RSO. He noted JMB had already breached the first two tiers, but that an attack on a foreigner would cross a major threshold with significant international implications.

[5](#). (SBU) August 17 and the sequence of subsequent events track with this framework. Leaflets found at many of the August 17 blast sites called for Sharia (Islamic) law in Bangladesh, urged judges and security personnel to join JMB's cause, and warned "anti-Islamic" NGOs, "non-believers," and all "oppressors," including President Bush and UK Prime Minister Blair, to "stop their repression" of Muslims or face attacks. (See ref B for a full account of the leaflet.)

[6](#). (SBU) After August 17, the judicial system bore the brunt of JMB attacks:

- October 3: Five coordinated blasts target four judges in their courtrooms in Chittagong, Chandpur, and Laxmipur in southeast Bangladesh (ref C);
- October 18: An attacker throws an IED at a judge exiting his vehicle at his residence in Sylhet, northeast of Dhaka;
- November 14: An attacker throws an IED into a vehicle carrying two judges to the district courthouse, killing both of them, in Jhalokhati District, 290 km south of Dhaka. This was the first inkling of a suicide bomber since the attacker, once in police custody, reportedly attempted to detonate an IED strapped to his leg (ref D);
- November 29: Two suicide bomber attacks within 45 minutes kill two police at a courthouse security checkpoint in Chittagong and five lawyers in a courthouse waiting room at the Deputy Commissioner of Administration's Office in

Gazipur, 32 km north of Dhaka (ref E);
- December 1: A suicide bomber kills one police officer and injures as many as 30 others at a security checkpoint in a second attack on the same government complex in Gazipur (ref F).

17. (SBU) Bangladeshi NGO partners of the U.S.-based and USAID-funded "Save the Children" received threat letters purportedly from JMB (ref H). Other Bangladeshi NGOs, businesses, educational institutions, the media, and civil society groups reported receiving JMB written or telephonic threats, although at least some of those were clearly hoaxes or extortion attempts. On December 8, a JMB attack in front of the leftist Udichi Cultural Club in Netrokona District, approximately 150 km northwest of Dhaka, claimed the life of the club's vice president (ref G).

18. (S/NF) While the JMB has not yet actually attacked a foreigner, there is compelling evidence that it surveilled Peace Corps volunteers and a Peace Corps training facility in Gazipur. On December 20, SIMO reported a threat against "foreigners" who teach English in Gazipur, and on December 22 an imam in the Gazipur area reportedly told a source that he overheard two young men and one older man say after prayers on December 16 that "the foreigners are lucky we missed them. Maybe there will be a better opportunity to strike again." This information tracked with a statement to law enforcement personnel by a detained JMB leader, and alleged bomb maker, in Gazipur that he had conducted six days of surveillance in the Gazipur area on foreign English teachers. (Note: All Peace Corps volunteers in Bangladesh teach English.) The JMB leadership reportedly ordered him to stand down, however, because of the impending SAARC summit in Dhaka on November 13-14 (ref J).

19. (SBU) "Amader Shomoy," an independent Bangla newspaper, ran a front-page story on January 18 entitled, "JMB Planned to Attack Peace Corps Volunteers." It reported that the JMB was foiled by the BDG's massive security blanket for the SAARC summit, but that several JMB suicide squads had been deployed to carry out the attacks. The JMB then allegedly changed its focus to the local government offices (see November 29 and December 1 attacks above). The article sourced the information to an arrested JMB militant, and stated JMB militants remain active in the Gazipur area.

110. (S/NF) Shahjahan Akand Shuva, writer of the story, and a colleague, Mohammed Shahidul Islam, told RSO on January 23 that they obtained their information from a Special Branch investigation report, which was passed to them by a paid informant, a SB transcriber.

111. (S/NF) On January 26, the RSO and Senior Security Investigator interviewed the JMB militant named in the article at the Special Branch police office under the watchful eyes of representatives of the Rapid Action Battalion (RAB), the National Security Intelligence (NSI) and the police. H. M. Anayatullah, aka Obyed, aka Jewel, DPOB February 21, 1980, Badshapara, Gopalganj district, Bangladesh, stated that he was the Gazipur district chief of JMB. When asked about any plans to attack foreigners or Americans, he said he observed five or six foreigners in September wearing shorts and short-sleeve shirts, and followed them to the Peace Corps training site in Gazipur. Between September and October, he surveilled the foreigners playing volleyball and traveling to the Peace Corps facility in Anwara Nibash. When he reported his surveillance to the JMB divisional commander Dhaka/Chittagong, he was told to wait for further instructions.

112. (S/NF) Anayatullah claimed the operation against the Peace Corps volunteers never went to the attack phase, and denied having any responsibility other than observing and reporting. He said that he had no knowledge of specific or ongoing JMB plans to attack Peace Corps or any other US or Western interests in Bangladesh. (For an in depth description of the events and investigation of the surveillance of the Peace Corps, see ref K.)

JMB TACTICS

113. (SBU) AUGUST 17. The IEDs in the August 17 blasts served as a "wake up" call on JMB capabilities and intentions, but they were not designed to be lethal. There were only two deaths in nearly 500 explosions. The IEDs, 35 mm film canisters packed with explosives, were placed in bags containing leaflets that flew into the air upon detonation.

114. (C/NF) On September 13, DCDB showed RSO a collection of explosive materials and bomb components, seized the day before in Dhaka, for what was assumed to be an imminent wave of JMB bombings. The seized home-made IEDs were six to eight times larger (roughly the size of a large coffee cup) and more powerful than those used on August 17. There were also

470 commercial detonators, capacitors to act as timers, and various aluminum-based explosives and AMNO3. The IEDs were fashioned to work like grenades, with a pin as a safety and a button to arm the device, suggesting that the devices were intended to be thrown or placed.

15. (C/NF) RSO was introduced to a 30-31 year old single male suspect who was allegedly responsible for making the IED triggers. He claimed to not know what the device was for or how it was to be used. Police tracked down others involved with the bomb-making process and learned that the process was compartmentalized; designers of various components claimed to not know what it was they were designing or who else was working on it. They speculated that the August 17 attack was also highly compartmentalized. Many arrestees, typically those who placed the devices, claimed to not know that the devices were IEDs, but rather that they were told the devices would simply "distribute leaflets."

16. (S/NF) RSO RESPONSE. RSO shared this information with SIMO, which arranged to have an explosives expert come to post to analyze the IED components. The expert's visit produced a four-page unclassified physical description and technical analysis of the devices, which was shared with the police and used to educate security personnel (both Embassy and host country) about the capabilities of JMB bomb makers.

17. (C/NF) October 3 Attack: Mohammed Alamgir Rahman, SP, Chandpur District, Mohammed Moin Uddin, OIC Kotwali Station of the Chittagong Metropolitan Police, and SI Mohammed Mostafa, Kotwali Station Laxmipur District, told RSO that the devices used in the October 3 attacks were crude and in a few cases ineffective. But they were well concealed. Instead of resembling the easily recognized grenade-type devices recovered in Dhaka, they looked like books and school pencil boxes. The attackers carried multiple devices. In some cases, when the primary device failed to detonate, the attackers deployed a second device. In other cases, attackers threw a second device as they fled the site.

18. (SBU) Surveillance of some sort almost certainly preceded the attacks. Attackers knew the location of the benches where judges sat in the courtroom, and, in one case, the location of the bench in relation to an exterior window through which an IED was thrown. Surveillance would not have been difficult as the courts are usually filled with the unscreened public.

19. (SBU) RSO RESPONSE. RSO staff discussed with the Embassy's Surveillance Detection (SD) Team the evolving JMB threat and tactics. After congratulating the SD for their great work in identifying an individual who was thought to be a suspect in the August 17 blasts, the RSO briefed on JMB's tactics to date, stressing the primary role of surveillance.

20. (C/NF) October 18: The Sylhet Superintendent of Police confirmed to RSO that the attacker threw an IED at a judge in front of his residence as he exited his vehicle, inflicting minor leg injuries. While fleeing the scene, the attacker threw a second advice, but he was overpowered by the public and held until the police arrived. Later, police officials discovered a third, unexploded device strapped to his waist. The IEDs were homemade, but much less powerful than those used in the October 3 attacks.

21. (SBU) Attacking a target as he exited his vehicle indicates prior surveillance. The two obvious choke points for the judge were his residence and place of work. He was predictable in his time and routes. It was unclear, however, if the IED strapped to the attacker's waist represented a suicide option or simply an additional weapon.

22. (SBU) November 14: A 28-year-old man approached a minivan conveying two judges from their residences to the local district court. The man attempted to give leaflets to the judges through an open window, and, when the judges refused, he threw an IED into the vehicle. The device detonated, killing both judges. The attacker was injured in the attack and taken into police custody. On his way to the hospital, he reportedly tried to detonate a second device attached to his thigh, but was stopped by police. At the hospital, he stated that he had joined JMB in 2000 and was a member of a JMB suicide squad.

23. (SBU) While the press called the attacker a suicide bomber, the BDG and other observers were less certain. BDG officials, reluctant to acknowledge Islamic extremism as a problem in Bangladesh, had always been quick to say that no Bangladeshi would be a suicide bomber because "it is not in our culture." If this was indeed a botched suicide attack, then it represented the crossing of a major psychological and tactical threshold just three months after the August 17 & wake up8 blasts. Police reacted to the attacks, and demonstrations by judges and lawyers for security, by placing armed officers in judges, vehicles and at judges' residences.

¶24. (SBU) November 29: If there were doubts about the November 14 attacker, they disappeared after two young men with devices strapped to their backs blew themselves up within 45 minutes of each other at a police checkpoint near the Chittagong district courthouse and in a lawyers, waiting room in the Gazipur courthouse.

¶25. (SBU) With these attacks, JMB's focus broadened from judges to others who participate in the judicial process. In addition, they adapted to police coverage at judges, residences and of judges, commuter vans by finding new targets. The Chittagong attacker is believed to have had a different target than the police checkpoint, whose security may have prevented him and a colleague from reaching their intended target. Alternatively, it might have spooked them into detonating their IEDs prematurely. The Gazipur attacker dressed in the same clothes as his victims, in a lawyer's gown, to gain access to the attack site, perhaps after having previously observed the ease with which lawyers moved through checkpoints.

¶26. (SBU) RSO RESPONSE. The RSO pushed back visitor screening to the Embassy property line, and realigned local guard resources to ensure that sufficient personnel were in position to conduct pat down searches as visitors approached the Embassy. SD assets were briefed of the emergence of suicide bombers and repositioned to observe the visa line, public affairs patrons, and other areas where a suicide bomber may focus their attention. The MSG detachment ran a series of react drills around a suicide bomber scenario.

¶27. (C/NF) December 1: Just two days later, the government offices in Gazipur were hit again, this time at a security checkpoint before the main administrative building. The Deputy Inspector General (DIG) for Dhaka told RSO that police had been instructed to pat down visitors, so when the 27-year-old attacker approached carrying a tea dispenser, he was stopped by the police for screening. The attacker then detonated a device that this time was not strapped to his body but hidden inside the tea dispenser. Again, this indicates prior JMB surveillance of the target.

¶28. (SBU) December 8: Alerted that there was an IED in the street in front of the Udichi Cultural Club, police detonated the device, causing a curious crowd to gather. Several minutes later, two suicide bombers in the crowd detonated themselves. With the hardening of security at courthouses and recent JMB attackers not having apparently reached their intended targets, the JMB branched out to attack indiscriminately what it sees as an "anti-Islamic" organization - a leftist cultural center.

CHANGING TACTICS

¶29. (SBU) The December 8 attack highlighted JMB's ability to change tactics to defeat police counter-measures while remaining consistent with the three tiers threat philosophy. The timed devices of August 17 evolved into grenade-like IEDs and then suicide bombs. Targets shifted from judges in easily accessible courthouses to judges at home or on the street at pre-determined chokepoints. When police hardened these targets with armed escorts and intensified vetting procedures, JMB upped the ante by concealing its bombs in everyday items like tea dispensers and then by launching suicide bombers. It broadened its target selection from judges to lawyers and then cultural leftists.

REGIONAL SECURITY OFFICE ACTIONS

¶30. (SBU) The RSO continues to conduct rigorous training and briefing programs for all Embassy staff on all aspects of security. Additional steps to upgrade and improve CACs have begun, including a project supported by the Overseas Building Office to develop man traps around vehicle screening areas. Post's EAC has been fully supportive of these security measures.

CONCLUSION

¶31. (C/NF). The arrests of several dozen major JMB leaders, and the recovery of large amounts of bomb-making materials, have apparently prompted a dramatic end, or at least lull, in attacks. Many BDG officials claim that they have "broken the back" of the JMB, while some, like the Home Minister, say "it is not over." The top two JMB leaders, Sheik Abdur Rahman and Bangla Bhai, remain at large. Whether the JMB is down and out or just taking a breather remains to be seen. RSO continues to work closely with local law enforcement and with other agencies in the Embassy to monitor and counter the volatile threat environment.

¶32. (U) Point of contact is the Regional Security Office, American Embassy Dhaka. Tel. (880 2) 885-5500 ext 2228.
CHAMMAS